
1992 Wis Eth Bd 9
LOCAL OFFICIALS -- MEALS, LODGING, TRAVEL AND
ENTERTAINMENT

A local public official may attend a breakfast meeting sponsored by a private firm at a convention if the official's local governmental unit would otherwise pay the cost. OEB 92-9

March 24, 1992

Facts

- [1] This opinion is based on these understandings:
- a. Your law firm wants to sponsor a breakfast meeting in connection with the annual convention of an association of local governmental units.
 - b. The association is a membership organization to which local governmental units are, by statute, permitted to belong.
 - c. Attendees at the annual convention are authorized to attend by their respective local governmental units, and the local units reimburse the costs of attendance.
 - d. The local governmental units will reimburse attendees for the cost of breakfast or pay increased registration costs if the breakfast was not underwritten by your law firm.

Question

- [2] The Ethics Board understands your question to be:

What restraint, if any, does the Code of Ethics for Public Officials impose on your firm's sponsorship of, or on a local official's participation at, the breakfast meeting?

Discussion

- [3] You may sponsor, and local officials attending the program may partake of, the breakfast without violating the Ethics Code for Local Officials. The provision that is most pertinent to your question is section 19.59(1)(a), *Wisconsin Statutes*, which provides in relevant part:

19.59(1)(a) No local public official may use his or her public position or office to obtain financial gain or anything of substantial

value for the private benefit of himself or herself or his or her immediate family, or for an organization with which he or she is associated.

[4] The breakfast appears to be of public benefit, rather than primarily of private benefit to local officials. For this reason, we do not believe the Ethics Code for Public Officials poses any restrictions to your proceeding with your plans as outlined.

Advice

[5] A local public official may attend a breakfast meeting sponsored by a private entity at a convention if the local governmental unit has authorized the official's attendance and would otherwise pay the cost.